

Understanding the Review Process



Grantsmanship
Workshop

Feb 8-9



Overview of the Competitive Grant Proposal Process



Application Process

Review Process

Award Administration Process



C S R E E S
INTEGRATED
PROGRAMS

Application Process

Request for Applications (RFA)

Posted to the CSREES website

www.csrees.usda.gov

Link to “Funding Opportunities” page



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Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service



CSREES advances knowledge for agriculture, the environment, human health and well-being, and communities through national program leadership and federal assistance.

In the News

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CSREES funds study on how workplace climate affects breast-feeding habits



CSREES awards \$10 million to sequence the swine genome



Partners Video Magazine highlights CSREES' National Research Initiative



Successful transition to organic production shows planning works

Funding Opportunities

- National Research Initiative
- Small Business Innovation Research
- More...

- Request for Applications (RFAs)
- Grant Application Forms

More Quick Links

- Local Extension Office
- Jobs and Opportunities
- State and National Partners
- CSREES Staff Directory
- Programs
- Program Impacts
- CRIS
- Directions to CSREES
- Site Map
- Budget Information

Application Process

Project Directors (PD)

Develop proposal in compliance with:

Specific program goals and priorities

Guidelines provided in RFA

Published Deadlines



Review Process

Understanding the review process for your *specific program* helps in preparation of a more competitive proposal

Review process is designed to be fair, effective, and unbiased



Review Process

Peer-reviewed competitive programs

Review by peers and other experts - provide written and/or verbal evaluations

Understand the review process for insight into your reviewers



Review Process

Evaluation factors are program-dependent and very important

Understand evaluation criteria before writing the proposal

Evaluation criteria are stated in the RFA



Review Process

CSREES Proposal Review

- Role of National Program Leader and Panel Manager
- Ground-rules for Review
- Evaluation Criteria
- Confidentiality
- Conflicts of Interest (COI)

Panel Manager

Active, established, scientist

Part-time USDA employee (1-2 years)

Duties and responsibilities:

- With NPL, selects panelists
- With NPL, assigns reviewers to proposals
- Chairs the panel meeting
- Assists NPL with budget decisions

Role of NPL and Panel Manager

Study proposals

Assign proposals for peer-review

3 panelists – 1^o, 2^o, and 3^o (or 'reader')

4 external *ad hoc* reviewers (optional)

Role of NPL and Panel Manager

Recruit panel members

Expertise and experience to cover portfolio of applications

Diverse representation

Organize and conduct review panel

Role of NPL and Panel Manager

Post-panel responsibilities

- Award administration

- Feedback and consultation on declined proposals

- Reporting success stories and highlights

Program education and promotion

Panel Member Selection

Active in Research, Education, or Extension

Balanced to represent breadth of proposals and applicants:

- Discipline
- Geography
- Institution Type
- Professional Rank
- Women & Minorities

Continuity: experience in the review process

Panel Member Selection

To be considered as a potential reviewer, please send an e-mail message with your contact information and area(s) of scientific or technical expertise to:

newreviewer@csrees.usda.gov

Role of Panelists

Review 15-20 proposals

Provide constructive and unbiased evaluation

Protect confidentiality

Avoid Conflicts of Interest



Ground Rules



Confidentiality

Conflict of Interest

Evaluation Criteria

Process and Protocols



Confidentiality

Proposal Content and Identity

Reviewer Identity

Reviews (shared with PD only)

Panel Proceedings



Conflicts of Interest

Advisors and Advisees (lifetime)

Collaborators and Co-authors (4 years)

Institutional

Anyone who stands to materially profit from an award decision



Conflicts of Interest

Applies to NPL, Panel Manager, Panelists, and *ad hoc* Reviewers

May not participate in any aspect of evaluation

May not participate in decisions regarding budget, project scope, or project duration



Evaluation Criteria

Always described in the RFA

Differ across programs

May differ *within* program by project type

Used by reviewers to evaluate your proposal



Example Evaluation Criteria

Proposal Relevance

Proposal Quality

Stated criteria are given equal weight unless otherwise noted in the RFA



Example Evaluation Criteria

Proposal Relevance

Documented Need: project is directed to current or likely future problems/challenges as identified in the RFA

Stakeholder Involvement: extent to which end users were/will be involved in problem identification, project planning, implementation, and evaluation

Example Evaluation Criteria

Proposal Relevance

Extension/Outreach Plan: application includes a detailed outreach plan that includes deliverables and a description of how impacts will be measured

Probability that project results will reach beyond project scale and duration

Example Evaluation Criteria

Proposal Quality

Adequacy and appropriateness of objectives for research, education, and extension, as appropriate

Suitability and feasibility of methodology for conducting work and time allotted to attain objectives

Example Evaluation Criteria

Proposal Quality

Qualifications of key project personnel

Adequacy of available support personnel,
equipment, and facilities



Review Process

Reviewers prepare written reviews

- Use evaluation criteria
- Address strengths and weaknesses
- Make suggestions for improvement



Review Process

Reviewers provide summary rating

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

During the Review Panel

Project types are reviewed and ranked separately

For example: in the NRI, integrated projects are reviewed and ranked as a group, and separate from research projects

During the Review Panel

Primary reviewer summarized proposal

Primary, secondary, and reader provide evaluation and critique in order

When used, *ad hoc* reviews are summarized

Ratings available to all panelists (except those with COI)

During the Review Panel

Panel discussion

Consensus and categorizing

- Outstanding
- High Priority
- Medium Priority
- Low Priority
- Do Not Fund

Prepare panel summary

During the Review Panel

Many panels re-rank proposals on the final day of panel

Re-visit categories

Numerical ranking - usually only proposals ranked in top ~25%

Review Process

Contact NPL if you do not receive an e-mail within 4 weeks of the deadline date acknowledging receipt of your proposal

Keep program updated of changes in address, phone number, status of other pending proposals, and COI status

Wait for notification of funding decision

Panel Summary

POSITIVE Aspects

NEGATIVE Aspects

SYNTHESIS



Awards

Phone call

Return of:

- Written Reviews
- Panel summary
- Relative ranking (categorical ranking)

Complete award paperwork

Declined Proposals

E-mail and/or letter from National Program Leader

Return of:

- Written Reviews
- Panel summary
- Relative ranking